



"RIDING ON"

Elliot Tramontana is a freshman at Lamar School and wants to be a professional golfer. He is an only child; his parents are Mark and Aimee Tramontana. Here's what Elliot said about his drawing: "I am better at expressing myself through drawing than in words ... Our military personnel are all heroes ... In my picture there is a soldier in a jeep. To me this makes me think that the soldiers are all riding along and have a bumpy road. They may run into a few obstacles, but they will overcome them and move on ... The picture that I drew also makes me think how our soldiers risk their lives for our freedom. This is a very noble deed ... All of our soldiers ride on — no matter what happens — and keep on doing their job for our nation."



Tramontana

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLIOT TRAMONTANA / THE MERIDIAN STAR

Bragging rights

The Meridian Star asked its readers, "Do you know a Guardsman who deserves a pat on the back?" Here are some of the responses.

"I want to brag on my son, Spc. Brandon A. Lee of the Army National Guard. He is stationed in Iraq. I am so proud of him. He is only 20 years old, has a wife and a 3-month-old baby girl and yet he still stands tall for his country. While his unit was training, Brandon won the coveted Sapper Spirit Award. That's just the kind of guy he is. Brandon, we support you and all the rest of the guys from the 150th Combat Engineer Battalion from Quitman. Come home safe, guys."

Brenda Brant Shubuta

"We want to brag on our son, Spc. Nathan Curtis Evans because he joined the Army National Guard before he even finished high school. He had to wait until he graduated to go to basic training. He served on active duty in Washington, D.C., for one year. He and the 1st Battalion, 204th Air Defense Artillery got back home on June 18, 2004.

"Now, Nathan works at Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg and is pretty sure that he is going to make the military his career.

"We are very proud of Nathan, and all that he has accomplished ... When Hurricane Ivan hit



Evans

the coast, Nathan was called to help with that. He was up bright and early as the storm was just beginning to get here, in Chunky. We were all scared to death, but he was ready to go.

"Nathan, I'd have to say, is a proud American who is proud of his country and what it stands for. And we would like to say to Nathan that we are very proud of you and we love you very much."

David and Faye Evans Chunky

"I want to brag on my husband, Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Davis because he is a very kind, loving, compassionate and giving person. He is very tenacious. I am very proud that my husband is one of many soldiers who will be defending our country in the name of freedom — and is there to help a nation understand freedom for all as we know in the United States. I truly love my husband and will be awaiting his safe return. God bless our troops and America."

Mary Davis Union

"I want to brag on my husband, Sgt. James 'Ken' Mangrum of the Mississippi Army National Guard. As much as my husband loves and misses his family from having to go to the war in Iraq, his first priority is to serve his country and help his fellow troop members in all that he can. I am very proud of him and the true man that he is."

Phyllis Mangrum Kosciusko

Chris Mabry: 'He left Meehan a boy, but he died a man'

Wyatt Rogers is the offensive coordinator for the Meridian High School football team. He never coached Chris Mabry, but he met him, and remembered him.

Pfc. Chris Mabry was one of 12 U.S. Marines killed in April 2004 in the Sunni Muslim town of Ramadi, Iraq. Wyatt honored him with an inscription on his coaching shirt this football season.

By Wyatt Rogers
special to The Star

I first met Christopher Mabry at Bonita Lakes Mall in December 2003. He was introduced to me by a former player of mine, Orion Carson.

Both of these men were dressed in their Marine uniforms and looked good. They had obviously not been out of basic training very long.

I don't know what it was but I was very impressed with Chris — it would turn into a lasting impression.

The first and last thing out of his mouth that day was 'sir,' which is becoming rare these days. I was also impressed with the youthfulness of

these two men. Somehow it made the war hit home.

I've coached kids like these and have been around them all my career.

A couple of months later, I picked up *The Meridian Star* and there was the picture of the first Lauderdale County casualty. Surely, that wasn't the kid I met in the mall. But I remember the name tag on his chest and what it said that day — "MABRY."

I was shocked. I couldn't believe that was the same kid.

Mr. Willie Shanrock, a friend of my grandfather's, helped get a memorial for Chris downtown. I went downtown to the memorial not long afterwards to pay my respects and to thank Mr. Shanrock for what he had done.

I met Frankie Woodall at the memorial, Chris' aunt, and I told her that I was going to do something this football season to honor Chris. I had this inscribed on my shirt in memory of Chris: "Christopher Mabry USMC - KIA IRAQ."

I thank God for men and women like Chris Mabry who are fighting and who have died for the freedoms we hold dear.

Someone said later on that Chris left Meehan a boy but he died a man. I have to agree.

Read about Staff. Sgt.
Carla Dionne Mayberry
of the
**248th Air Traffic
Control Squadron**



Mayberry

in the Health and
Medical section of
"Profile 2005: A Letter
from Home."